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**INTERVIEW WITH
FATHER PHILIP BERRIGAN**

also

Abdullah Thabit Sabur

Wayne Welch

Paul O. Williams

Robert Paglia

Salasin

M. Marcuss Oslander

Garo Ray

and

essay by

Pulitzer Prize-Winner

GARY SNYDER

LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN

THE NOISELESS SPIDER

Vol. V No. 1

Fall 1975

IN MEMORIAM

Stephen J. Bennett
(1924-1975)

The sudden death of Steve Bennett this summer has left the New Haven academic community deeply grieved. At the time of his death, Steve was dean of continuing education at Quinnipiac College, but he had also been dean of faculty at the University of New Haven from 1958 to 1967. Those who knew the man—his searching mind, his enthusiasms, his invincible heart—know the full dimensions of our loss. In memory of the things he did (and dreamed of doing) during the years he spent among us, this issue of *The Noiseless Spider* is dedicated to Steve Bennett.

"And this slow spider which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together of eternal things—must not all of this have been there before? And must it not all return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, on this long dreadful path? Must we not eternally return?"

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Published by the English Club of the University of New Haven

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial board of *The Noiseless Spider* agrees with Henry Miller that the pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in our own web.

INTERVIEW WITH PHIL BERRIGAN



Philip and Daniel Berrigan walking arm-in-arm at the Federal Correctional Institution at Danbury, Connecticut.

On October 5, 1975, Father Philip Berrigan and twenty other persons were arrested in Hartford and charged with "disorderly conduct and criminal trespass in the first degree" when they protested what they termed "an exhibit of instruments of death" at Pratt & Whitney's 50th Anniversary Air Show. Their protest took the form of pouring blood onto the cockpits of fighter planes on display at the show. Earlier in the year, Father Berrigan had been invited to give a lecture at the

University of New Haven by The English Club. The following interview was given to members of the editorial board of THE NOISELESS SPIDER shortly after Berrigan's lecture before a UNH audience of nearly two hundred people.

Spider: Since you're here as a guest of the university's English Club, perhaps we could start by asking you a literary question. First of all, are you doing any writing at the moment? Are you working on anything?

Berrigan: Not at the moment, no. The latest book is the book on my prison experiences, *Widen the Prison Gates*, which should be out in paperback before too long. Other than that, there are a few short pieces I'm in the process of finishing but nothing as ambitious as a book.

Spider: Which of your published books has given you the most trouble? *Prison Journals of a Priest Revolutionary* seems to be the most widely read and admired among them. Do you have a special preference among your books?

Berrigan: Well, *Prison Journals* required an awful lot of editing. It was a much bigger, looser, more sprawling book than the final version. It was written in rather trying circumstances and, in its original version, didn't have the tightness of a book like *No More Strangers*, for instance. But I have no special favorites, really. I regard writing as merely a means to an end. And I have no patience with editing as such. I'm perfectly happy to leave that to others.

Spider: Is it possible, do you think, for a writer to bring about fundamental changes in people's ways of thinking and acting through his writings? Are writers taken seriously in this society?

Berrigan: Some writers, yeah. My brother Dan has managed to change two or three minds, I think.

Spider: Is he working on anything new at the moment?

Berrigan: He's been working on a new book of poems, I know that much. But his health has been pretty bad for a while. I don't think he's doing much writing right now. He's teaching, you know.

Spider: What direction do you think American society is taking now that Watergate has been exposed for all to see? Do you think we're entering a period of cynicism, of withdrawal from public concern for justice and equal opportunity? Do you think the great upsurge of activism of the late 1960's is pretty much a thing of the past?

Berrigan: There aren't too many signs of that right now. Things are quiet. And some of the cynicism is certainly not without justification. There are some in our society who are going to become escapists to an increasing degree. And the cults and the religious spin-offs and new creations, call them what you will, are going to be—just possibly—are going to so proliferate that they'll be impossible to keep track of. And, you know, this is neurosis. This is *lunacy*. The leadership at the top of the heap

exhibited, through their own intransigence, a sort of *determinism*—the rigidity that the people exhibited by the fact that they're *running away*—they're deep into astrology, they're running here and there after esoteric and, in some cases, unintelligible systems of believing and living. Some of these things are exploiting our terrors—and can be extremely dangerous. And it ought to be cited for what it is: it's a narcotic. Those of us—those of *you*—who come from activist experience know that there's almost no public unselfishness left at all—of experimentation with notions of charity and concern. No concern for victims. You turn *sour*, you turn deep into *yourself*.

Spider: Father Berrigan, how do you feel about the prospects for optimism? Some of us have detected, in all you've been saying, that there doesn't seem to be much of a sense of optimism.

Berrigan: Oh, I don't know. This gets very, very trite but I used to know some fellows out of Kentucky and Tennessee who were in the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement. I used to preach in their churches, little Fundamentalist kind of places—if you want to use a pejorative term, “redneck” churches—in those two states. And they used to take pilgrimages into the South in big demonstrations and marches like at Selma, Alabama, and other places. They were dedicated witnesses—oblivious to the fact that the odds were against them. They tried to encourage people—including their Black sisters and brethren—they'd say: “There's really more faith around than you can possibly *handle*.” And so long as you see people privileged to come to grips and to break out of this mutual design that all of us have to be into, *break out* of their enslavement—we're under cultural enslavement today—and when we find people earnestly trying to do *that*, that's a great thing. That's a magnificent expression of hope. It's—well, a kind of statement that they're *unbeaten*. They aren't beaten yet.

Spider: You're talking now about a life-style, aren't you?

Berrigan: No, no, not necessarily. That's *part* of it. That's part of it. But when people are *talking* to one another and *questioning*, and striving to treat one another generously and gently, and when they're wrestling with the deep question: “How do we

take public responsibility for this terrible smear that's being laid on us, *imposed* upon us, by the irresponsible ones in this country?" That's a tremendous expression of hope . . .

Spider: From the tenor of everything you've said here today, it looks as if you see hope for the future entirely in *people* and not in systems of belief or institutions at all—churches and so forth?

Berrigan: Right. My friends and myself, we're not taking much stock in politicians any longer. And yet we don't write them off as human beings. Needless to say, some of them have been co-opted to the obscenities of institutional *power*. But we're no longer lobbying. We think we can make a greater contribution than by doing that. And that's by openly speaking truth to power—and *acting* truth, whenever necessary. After all, common sense tells us that word and act are only fully human when they're *one*. Faith tells us that the profession of life is an unalterable resistance to the high and mighty, who pose as patrons of people while destroying them. Without acting out one's resistance one can't *realize* humanity in oneself or in others—only illusion, euphoria, comfort, escape. Resistance always outrages the high and mighty, who tolerate such behavior neither in Christ nor in ourselves. Most of us will probably see worse days before better. And quite a few of us will see worse days from a jail cell. But that mustn't discourage anyone who wishes to keep hope really alive. I think, personally, that no society is worth fighting for unless that society exists for its weakest members. Gandhi said it best when he said that a society is most viable when it exists *for its children*.

Spider: But can that kind of society be achieved when violence and racism seem to be so intrinsic to human nature? And not only the kind of white racism that we find here in the States and in South Africa, but among the Black nations as well. Do you have any ideas, for instance, on African racism and the fact that it's so generally ignored? For example, when the white colonialists left, or rather were thrown out of Africa, they drew up the borders of the countries down there on the basis of split-up tribes, such as in Nigeria. They put in the Ibos, who consisted of about a third of the country, with a tribe whom they were extremely hostile to. The result of that was the Biafran War, in

which it's estimated that close to a million people were massacred. Why is it that this seems to be generally ignored by the political Left in America?

Berrigan: Well, I think because that kind of racism, as you call it, is—although terrible—really *minuscule* in comparison with the kind of racism I was talking about earlier in the day. None of us would support racism in any form, whether it be Black or white. But we can't very well compare white racism with Black—in intensity and pervasiveness, even in *quality* and in terms of historical weight, we *can't*!

Spider: Why not?

Berrigan: Well, I'll leave that up to *you*. (*Smiles.*) You try to find out. You try to find out if in this society or in the Union of South Africa or in southwest Africa—you know, we of the West have made racism one of the really *major* institutions of our society. What you were talking about earlier—the Biafran War—that's a question of political disputes. It's ascribable to a complex political-cultural climate. And you know very well we run into a certain amount of Black racism from Black Americans—but it's got to be minuscule in comparison to the constant pressures and traumas which our society has *institutionalized*—in an unofficial way, of course. There's the paradox. There's no comparison between the two, all right? It's like a State Department apologist saying to me or to somebody I work with: "You never speak about the atrocities committed by the Viet Cong." Well, there's really an utter lack of proportionality in a question like that. The fire-power ratio, for example, is about a thousand-to-one—if it isn't *more* than that! So we're supposed to talk about atrocities on people who are in a position of being helpless mice in an experiment. You see, there's a *bias* there.

Spider: What's your opinion of President Ford's amnesty program for draft resisters—in one sentence? Or two?

Berrigan: I can give it to you in one word: it's a *farce!* An outrageous and immoral farce. It persists in regarding the courageous few who have put their lives on the line to bring an end to an obscene war as criminals, as law-breakers. Whereas it's really the architects of that war who are the criminals. The re-

sisters who stood up to illegitimate power are pretty clear in their own minds about the criminality of the government. And shouldn't we *all* be? If we had any true charity, we would welcome those young people back with open arms. And the next step would be to figure out ways of forgiving those who drove them out of their own country against their wishes. And then get down to the business of solving some of the country's problems. But this won't happen today. Or tomorrow. And that's one of the reasons why there's now so much of that apathy we were talking about earlier. Students, especially, are deeply disillusioned about the lack of human feeling which the older generation has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate.

Spider: But what can be done to *change* all this? You call yourself a "priest revolutionary." What's your solution? Do you advocate violent social upheaval? Do you advocate *revolution*?

Berrigan: I happen to think Mao Tse-tung is right in calling for perpetual revolution. But I think he's wrong in his reasons and in his means. People have got to accept personal and social revolution in order to become fully human. But the means of revolution are much more profound and modest than anything historical or contemporary. For example, insuring that a few less children *die*. Or go hungry. Perhaps if Americans learned to build nonviolent communities of resistance, concentrating on the essential rather than the grandiose, they might in time learn how to hold leaders *accountable* for peace. They might learn how to throw open their prisons, to break down corporate monsters to manageable size, to dismantle their war machine. The power of God—as well as *true political power*—starts with tiny beginnings. The Kingdom of God begins like a mustard seed. True power begins in Christ's cleansing of the Temple. Liberation begins in Gandhi's handful of salt.

—Interview given on the UNH campus
on February 14, 1975.

LOVE SONG VII

to be the water
bending to receive you
containing your total self
but not restricting your movements
touching and stimulating every inch
of your being altering and adjusting
my form to the conformity of your
spatial sculpting never losing contact
at any point always supporting every
point twisting when you twist curving
where you curve active in your passivity
passive in your activity changing in
form but never in property . . .
holding you but never restraining you
active in soothing and cleansing you
in my passivity
to be the water

— *Abdullah Thabit Sabur*

SOARING EAGLE

In a quiet time of life, many many years before today, there lived a small tribe of Indians called the Deer tribe. True to their name, they were a graceful, peaceful, and quick-of-both-foot-and-wit tribe. Their land lay in a valley of tall green grass. So full and green was their grass that many an Indian child would imagine it a river while crawling thru it so that soon the name of their valley became the River of Grass. Surrounding and towering over their River of Grass valley were four mountain peaks, to the north, south, east and west. Their valley was protected on all four sides by the mountain of rock. They lived snugly secure as if within a fortress, but a fortress of natural beauty created by nature not by man.

On the night of a new Deer's birth, all the tribe would gather around the mother's tepee, building a fire for warmth and singing strong songs of joy for inspiration. On such a night was Soaring Eagle brought into this world. But a strange event occurred on this night which was to mark this young Deer's life forever and make him different from his tribe.

As was the custom, Soaring Eagle's mother brought him out of her tepee and walked with him to the center of the tribe where a cradle was placed for his small life to lay and be seen by all. It was then that a sudden stillness fell over the people, as if an in-



visible hand was pressed to all their lips at once. During this quiet of quiets it happened.

Flying down within the center of the hushed circle of Deer, an eagle perched above the cradle and locked his hard clear eyes upon the resting child. The cat-eyed moon poured down stain-glass light as the eagle stared into the innocent face. Deer's Chief, Tall Shadow, sat crossed-leg ten feet away from the great bird and knew in his heart what this omen meant. He knew the eagle had chosen this child to carry out some plan the great bird wished completed. As he watched the silent sight of the bird and boy, the Chief understood that deep within a kernel of the child lived a secret, an extraordinary secret which would wait there inside him until the time was right for it to surface, like the slow surfacing of a sliver in the finger. Just as the seeds in the earth await their own special rain song before they dance their way up to the sun and blossom in fragrance for us all.

As suddenly as he came, so the eagle left in slow strokes of power rising high into the night and out of sight. The tribe stirred and crowded round the child to see one small feather on his pillow which he curled round and went fast to sleep. Seeking some meaning to it all, the Deer tribe turned their eyes to Chief Tall Shadow who now stood like one of their mountains towering above the sleeping child. The Chief gently lay his hands over the mother's strong young shoulders and spoke: "From this day on, we will call your young brave Soaring Eagle. He will one day be teacher to us all as he has been marked for this tonight." At the moment these words were spoken, the silver clouds skated away from the moon and light streamed down on the Deer tribe as they one and all returned to their tepees.

From a child to a boy took Soaring Eagle only seven years. Within those years were the bonds of friendship to last his lifetime. All who knew him loved him for he was kind in both word and deed and would do anything for a friend. His presence was felt in all the lives of the Deer tribe but especially so in the hearts of Dandelion and Running Cloud, his two best friends.

Dandelion had sunny hair and with sky-blue eyes she would spend hour after hour watching the movements of all the animals and stand very still as the wind played thru the brightly

colored flowers. When very small, while exploring a beaver's dam, she watched the beaver so long that the sun went down and the moon rose over her tiny shoulder before she realized how late she had stayed. Since she had never before been outside the tribe's tepee circle after dark, she soon lost her way and grew frightened as the cold and dark swept over her like a black cloud. Even at an early age Soaring Eagle seemed to always be awake to the first hint of danger, as his eyes never stopped roaming and absorbing like a sponge all that went on in the Deer tribe. So it was Soaring Eagle who at the first sign of sundown went out in search of Dandelion and found her many hours later shivering with fear and cold.

Running Cloud was a very shy young brave who spent his time daydreaming because he was afraid to make friends. He wanted to make friends with those of his tribe but he feared they would laugh at him if he told them of his dreams which meant so much to him. But one day Soaring Eagle came over to him and sat down telling him the most wonderful dream he had ever heard. "I dreamed I was a castle in secluded woods of peace where deer sit company and cardinals come to drink from my moat surrounding me. I felt the animals and birds fill me, their touch upon my walls, and all their many-colored eyes looking inside my windows where small sparrows flew in and kept my floor clean with their tiny beaks. It was all so colorful with the hundreds of different furs and feathers costuming my many rooms. I awoke when the magician living inside my castle tower came down and stood on my balcony spreading his arms like bird wings and all of me curled up inside his magic robe and went away with him." When Running Cloud heard this dream, he knew Soaring Eagle would never laugh at his dreams and they became best of friends.

So with the bond of shared experience in their hearts, Soaring Eagle explored the River of Grass with Running Cloud and Dandelion singing and humming as they went. All around them were secret places to run and play. Trees wagged their branches in the wind like the tails of dogs. Elk and fawn made their bed of leaves beneath the trees. Small puddles held rain water reflecting their three faces and they would laugh seeing themselves this way. The days melted together this way like cotton candy sweet on their tongues, and one day as they were singing, mak-

ing up the words as they went along, they made up the song which would be handed down from child to child throughout the Deer tribe.

DEER SONG

*Thru grass and trees
We skip to nowhere
On hands and knees
We play games everywhere

We love the sunshine
It turns our skin gold
Like grapes on the vine
We're good we are told

So we run with the deer
Until day turns into night
Then thru the dark without fear
We see our tepees thru moonlight

Crossing laughing streams
We jump with happy hearts
To our beds and dreams
As the eagle overhead darts*

Worn at the back of his head band, the eagle feather from his night of birth held a special power for Soaring Eagle, or so the great Deer Chief, Tall Shadow, told him. The Deer Chief asked him what he was thinking, often, such as when the geese flew in a V pattern overhead. Tall Shadow felt Soaring Eagle could give him a sign, a deeper meaning for what was on the surface of things.

A lone rider appeared one day in the Deer camp seeking the Chief. Though the rider was in war paint, the Deer tribe held no fear against nor harm for the Indian because peace had been constant in their tribe and they chose to live this way forever. The Chief welcomed him to his tent with food and drink. They were a long time together before the rider left. The Deer Chief stayed alone in his tent until sunset when he called for Soaring Eagle. The Chief spoke slowly and intently to his young brave: "The lone one riding into our circle today was a messenger from

the bordering tribe of Crow, our brothers to the east. The message was from their Chief, Red Sun. He is in grief over his daughter, Little Wings, who went out walking late yesterday and never returned. Red Sun is blinded by his grief and believes we have captured her! His war messenger said that if his daughter was not released by sunset tomorrow, then he would attack us and take her by force. He will not talk more on this, he has made words and will shower arrows if they are not heeded. Soaring Eagle you must do what I cannot myself. You must go in search of her and find her before sunset tomorrow. The peace of our people lives behind your eyes. Be all our eyes, Soaring Eagle."

Even though the moon was rising when Soaring Eagle left the Chief's tepee, he went in search of Little Wings, taking nothing but his desire to return peace to his people. He combed every secret place he had ever been with Running Cloud and Dandelion, running and stopping and searching. The hours slipped by like fish thru a stream and still he had not found her. He then began the climb of the northern mountain, hunting every cave and ledge. During his climb, twice he lost his grip and sliding like an ice cube over ice, lay on a ledge battered and bloody. But he kept on long after the moonlight turned to lemon glow and sunrise spread like a lotus over the sky.

At the base of the southern mountain, bone-tired and aching from strained muscles, he crawled into a cave at the lip of the mountain to rest a moment before climbing the rest of the way. Just before his eyes had closed, he caught sight of a flash of color drawing his attention like a magnet. It was an eagle! He had crawled into an eagle's den! Fear raced thru him like fire as his eyes grew wide taking in the terrible size of the great bird. To run now was all his mind seized upon, yet the fear of being caught in mid-stride froze his body where it lay. As the eagle stepped back into the cave's shadows Soaring Eagle saw a sleeping girl where the great bird had stood before. His heart pounded like a drum at the sight, it could only be Little Wings! He awakened her gently, careful not to startle the closely hovering wings of the eagle. At first sight of him upon waking, she cowered back into the shadows in fear of the strange Indian boy. In her sudden movements she brushed against the eagle's huge wings

which caused her to cry out and shoot like an arrow to Soaring Eagle's side. At that instant, Soaring Eagle noticed the same eagle feather which graced his own head band graced hers as well, and suddenly he realized what had happened and remembered the words his Chief had spoken about a secret.

Soaring Eagle told her not to fear the great bird. When in answer to his question that she was Little Wings, she nodded yes, he then asked her if an eagle perched upon her cradle at birth. She again nodded yes while deep awe swam into her deep brown eyes. He put his hand on her trembling shoulder saying, "The feather in your head band is the same as mine and they both came from this eagle. I am Soaring Eagle from the Deer tribe and my name came to me on the night this eagle came to my cradle. My Chief, Tall Shadow, told me of a secret beginning on that night, he didn't say what secret, but this I now know is it. We are both chosen by this majestic eagle. After prayer to him, we'll walk thru our River of Grass and on to the peak of our valley where your sad-eyed father Red Sun awaits your return and he will hear our story from our own lips." Little Wings had been listening as if in a dream and on his last words she broke down and cried for him, a broken honeycomb pouring sweetness down his brown-skinned neck.

That night in the Deer circle were new faces golden from the firelight as Crow and Deer became one family. Deer songs and Crow songs joined the night together with serene stitches harmonizing on the air and the many-colored beads exchanged to one another shone around necks like the surf around the shore. That night a new name was born for these two tribes who had joined into one, the Eagle tribe. Peace grew wide awake in the Eagle hearts like their rainbow-colored flowers waking up in the morning in the River of Grass valley.

—Wayne Welch

DELIVERIES

John Downing wheels his wagon up the walk
between the rows of peonies and vines.
He rings the bell. She opens up. No talk
or smile. Business. She inclines
her head in a dismissing nod, enshrines
herself beneath a giant hanging bowl
of plastic daisies. Since it's noon she dines
on lukewarm chicken soup, a puffy roll
with jelly, cut in quarters, swallowed whole.

Mrs. Martin's house is done in cat
and pink. She greets him robed in smoke. Her face
is ruddy, swelled. A Persian cascades fat
and fur across her arm. She shows a trace
of mustard on the finger pointing to a place
beside her manx for him to leave the bread
and cookies. By the tab he takes a case
of empties, leaves the full. Little's said.
She smiles, pats his arm, returns to bed.

John mounts the knobby side-porch, feels the sag
of tired boards, accepts the mongrel's nose.
He bangs the drooping screen, the plumpish bag
cocked on one hip. Three ears of corn expose
their silk beyond the rim. Slow steps. He goes
inside, pulled by the mouth of Mrs. Link,
whose eyes and lips, mirth-spread, deep-cut, disclose
her age and gold. And leaning on the sink,
she asks him to sit down and have a drink.

— *Paul O. Williams*



GARY SNYDER

(photo: Thomas Victor)

THE WILDERNESS

I am a poet. My teachers are other poets, American Indians, and a few Buddhist priests in Japan. The reason I am here is because I wish to bring a voice from the wilderness, my constituency. I wish to be a spokesman for a realm that is not usually represented either in intellectual chambers or in the chambers of government.

I was climbing Glacier Peak in the Cascades of Washington several years ago, on one of the clearest days I had ever seen. When we reached the summit of Glacier Peak we could see almost to the Selkirks in Canada. We could see south far beyond the Columbia River to Mount Hood and Mount Jefferson. And, of course, we could see Mount Adams and Mount Rainier. We could see across Puget Sound to the ranges of the Olympic Mountains. My companion, who is a poet, said: "You mean, there is a senator for all this?"

Gary Snyder, *TURTLE ISLAND*. Copyright © 1971 by Gary Snyder. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Unfortunately, there isn't a senator for all that. And I would like to think of a new definition of humanism and a new definition of democracy that would include the nonhuman, that would have representation from those spheres. This is what I think we mean by an ecological conscience.

I don't like Western culture because I think it has much in it that is inherently wrong and that is at the root of the environmental crisis that is not recent; it is very ancient; it has been building up for a millennium. There are many things in Western culture that are admirable. But a culture that alienates itself from the very ground of its own being—from the wilderness outside (that is to say, wild nature, the wild, self-contained, self-informing ecosystems) and from that other wilderness, the wilderness within—is doomed to a very destructive behavior, ultimately perhaps self-destructive behavior.

The West is not the only culture that carries these destructive seeds. China had effectively deforested itself by 1000 A.D. India had effectively deforested itself by 800 A.D. The soils of the Middle East were ruined even earlier. The forests that once covered the mountains of Yugoslavia were stripped to build the Roman fleet, and those mountains have looked like Utah ever since. The soils of southern Italy and Sicily were ruined by latifundia slave-labor farming in the Roman Empire. The soils of the Atlantic seaboard in the United States were effectively ruined before the American Revolution because of the one-crop (tobacco) farming. So the same forces have been at work in East and West.

You would not think a poet would get involved in these things. But the voice that speaks to me as a poet, what Westerners have called the Muse, is the voice of nature herself, whom the ancient poets called the great goddess, the Magna Mater. I regard that voice as a very real entity. At the root of the problem where our civilization goes wrong is the mistaken belief that nature is something less than authentic, that nature is not as

alive as man is, or as intelligent, that in a sense it is dead, and that animals are of so low an order of intelligence and feeling, we need not take their feelings into account.

A line is drawn between primitive peoples and civilized peoples. I think there is a wisdom in the worldview of primitive peoples that we have to refer ourselves to, and learn from. If we are on the verge of postcivilization, then our next step must take account of the primitive worldview which has traditionally and intelligently tried to open and keep open lines of communication with the forces of nature. You cannot communicate with the forces of nature in the laboratory. One of the problems is that we simply do not know much about primitive people and primitive cultures. If we can tentatively accommodate the possibility that nature has a degree of authenticity and intelligence that requires that we look at it more sensitively, then we can move to the next step. "Intelligence" is not really the right word. The ecologist Eugene Odum uses the term "biomass."

Life-biomass, he says, is stored information; living matter is stored information in the cells and in the genes. He believes there is more information of a higher order of sophistication and complexity stored in a few square yards of forest than there is in all the libraries of mankind. Obviously, that is a different order of information. It is the information of the universe we live in. It is the information that has been flowing for millions of years. In this total information context, man may not be necessarily the highest or most interesting product.

Perhaps one of its most interesting experiments at the point of evolution, if we can talk about evolution in this way, is not man but a high degree of biological diversity and sophistication opening to more and more possibilities. Plants are at the bottom of the food chain; they do the primary energy transformation that makes all the life-forms possible. So perhaps plant-life is what the ancients meant by the great goddess. Since plants support the other life-forms, they became the "people" of the land. And the land—a country—is a region within which the interactions of water, air, and soil and the underlying geology and the overlying (maybe stratospheric) wind conditions all go to create both the microclimates and the large climactic patterns that make a whole sphere or realm of life possible.

The people in that realm include animals, humans, and a variety of wild life.

What we must find a way to do, then, is incorporate the other people—what the Sioux Indians called the creeping people, and the standing people, and the flying people, and the swimming people—into the councils of government. This isn't as difficult as you might think. If we don't do it, they will revolt against us. They will submit non-negotiable demands about our stay on the earth. We are beginning to get non-negotiable demands right now from the air, the water, the soil.

I would like to expand on what I mean by representation here at the Center from these other fields, these other societies, these other communities. Ecologists talk about the ecology of oak communities, or pine communities. They *are* communities. This place—this Center—is of the order of a kiva of elders. Its function is to maintain and transmit the lore of the tribe on the highest levels. If it were doing its job completely, it would have a cycle of ceremonies geared to the seasons, geared perhaps to the migrations of the fish and to the phases of the moon. It would be able to instruct in what rituals you follow when a child is born, when someone reaches puberty, when someone gets married, when someone dies. But, as you know, in these fragmented times, one council cannot perform all these functions at one time. Still it would be understood that a council of elders, the caretakers of the lore of the culture, would open themselves to representation from other life-forms. Historically this has been done through art. The paintings of bison and bears in the caves of southern France were of that order. The animals were speaking through the people and making their point. And when, in the dances of the Pueblo Indians and other peoples, certain individuals became seized, as it were, by the spirit of the deer, and danced as a deer would dance, or danced the dance of the corn maidens, or impersonated the squash blossom, they were no longer speaking for humanity, they were taking it on themselves to interpret, through their humanity, what these other life-forms were. That is about all we know so far concerning the possibilities of incorporating spokesmanship for the rest of life in our democratic society.

Let me describe how a friend of mine from a Rio Grande

pueblo hunts. He is twenty-seven years old. Pueblo Indians, and I think probably most of the other Indians of the Southwest, begin their hunt, first, by purifying themselves. They take emetics, a sweat bath, and perhaps avoid their wife for a few days. They also try not to think certain thoughts. They go out hunting in an attitude of humility. They make sure that they need to hunt, that they are not hunting without necessity. Then they improvise a song while they are in the mountains. They sing aloud or hum to themselves while they are walking along. It is a song to the deer, asking the deer to be willing to die for them. They usually still-hunt, taking a place alongside a trail. The feeling is that you are not hunting the deer, the deer is coming to you; you make yourself available for the deer that will present itself to you, that has given itself to you. *Then* you shoot it. After you shoot it, you cut the head off and place the head facing east. You sprinkle corn meal in front of the mouth of the deer, and you pray to the deer, asking it to forgive you for having killed it, to understand that we all need to eat, and to please make a good report to the other deer spirits that he has been treated well. One finds this way of handling things and animals in all primitive cultures.

—Gary Snyder

Arrangements for the inclusion of Pulitzer Prize-winner Gary Snyder's "The Wilderness" in this issue were made by the SPIDER's roving editor, John Perry.

MACHO

You're just like every other
camel-smoking
mechanical electrical wizard
I know
button pushing
screw driver
making the world
your own
warming the crisp white coffee cup
with smoking lips
oiling the typewriter keys
with peppermint promises
soothing the xerox
with whispers
then coming home
unzipping your pants
and plugging it in.

—M. Marcuss Oslander

CONTE DRAJOLIQUE

(*à la Aesop*)

I lived in a beautiful house my father built across the summer palace grounds of the Sultan, on a wide but unpaved street in the little town of Nicodemia, nestled in an amphitheatre of gently sloping hills dotted with clumps of quite ordinary houses for a population of maybe ten thousand.

Father had a lot of imagination in building this house—in a more modest way, he copied the massive iron gates turned green in time, which led to the carriage way into the summer palace grounds. Ours was painted a pale green and on one side of it, he planted a climbing wild rose tree—it had four slender trunks and the mass that was draped over the door bore beautiful, white roses. It was, with the door, our prize possession.

The town boasted, too, a young man—about sixteen at the time, and he was the *enfant terrible* of our street, if not all of Nicodemia. He had a beautiful, strong singing voice and almost every early evening, just after the sun finally disappeared, he would stand on his rear balcony and serenade his true love who lived somewhere on the hill. It was a stentorian voice as he sang but halted every once in a while to yell, “*I love you, Antaran, I love you!*”

Onnig—that was his name—walked up the street every once in a while and stood right in front of our iron gate and with knife

in hand, would threaten to cut down our rose tree. Mother humored him with words, but more often the humoring took the form of some goodie he was offered to go away.

He also made kites—big, beautiful ones. And here he comes with one of these kites flying, holding the string and walking it up the street. There I am, a little boy of eight or so, sitting on the steps in front of the gate. He is now abreast of me, still holding the string of that beautiful kite and Mother is looking out of the open window to mediate whatever crisis Onnig will create.

Madame, he yells, I will not cut your rose tree down today, if you will buy my kite for your kid. Mother agrees and now that monster is handing me the string and there I am, sitting down and flying the kite. A few seconds—just a few—Onnig is making a little pass, sort of pushing the kite string with his body and *disaster!* The string in my hand is but a short piece floating to the ground and the kite takes off into the limitless blue sky, past the top of the Sultan's clock-tower directly ahead, as I whimper softly in utter fear of offending the *major domo* of delinquents of that time . . .

—Garo Ray

LI AO, POET

Note: Li Ao, noted author, critic, and editor of Wen Hsing, the suppressed intellectual magazine in Taiwan, was imprisoned for undisclosed reasons, in 1971. Currently in Chingmei Garrison Command Camp near Taipei, it is rumored that he is dying from the lung infections so common among the over-crowded camps throughout "free China."

Li Ao, poet,
Publisher of broadsides,
Editor of suppressed magazines,
Blown away
As one thin ribbon of incense
In the wind.
Twelve unpublished books
And sunlight on the sides of heavy seas
Under skies like rice paper. Typhoon coming
From the South,
Even within the barbed wire,
The pressure of the moist wind.

Li Ao,
The smooth bamboo of your brush
Is still warm.

—Salasin

HENRY MILLER AND STIRNERIAN OWNNESS

Henry Miller is more properly referred to as *individual* than literary artist. Certainly, Miller is as literary as any zealous critic would care to make him. But to achieve an accurate perspective on Miller, the literary zealot is at a disadvantage. The disadvantage is due to the fact that the literary zealot presupposes a literary perspective in his interpretation of Miller. But Miller is an individual, a man, who has chosen literature, with a small "l," to express himself. He is not an individual who aspired to literary distinction so as to make his contribution to the massive field of Literature, with a capital "L." Miller is an individual who struggled to create for himself a region of self-expression, an outlet for the tumultuous and meandering energies within him. Miller has imposed himself, *as individual*, upon Literature. That is to say, Miller has inverted the hierarchy of values. Usually, the writer presents himself as a means to the elucidation of sensibilities and ideas. He is a vehicle of enlightenment for some greater mode of Reality. But Miller transforms Literature into "literature," i.e., Literature becomes the vehicle for Miller to elucidate *himself*.

In this respect, Miller shares a kinship or affinity with Max Stirner. In Stirner's most notorious publication, *The Ego and His Own*, a philosophy of extreme and thoroughgoing individualism is propounded. Stirner, a precursor of Nietzsche, ascribes ultimate reality to the individual ego aspiring to realize his own, i.e., the individual creating a world of his own making, in which he can *prevail*. The Stirnerian ego cannot tolerate any thing or

situation which would be assigned a greater reality than the individual ego. Abstractions are merely linguistic devices. Terms such as Man, Truth, Good, Evil, God, Literature, Science, Art, etc., are convenient hypostatizations which are in no way metaphysically *prior* to the individual ego. They are words and titles which exist solely for the individual's purposes. The Stirnerian egoist is an amoebic individual perpetually arrogating himself new situations, ingesting them and transforming them into sustenance for himself. The individual ego's advancement is the sole justification for any action.

In the literary world, many writers have held Literature itself as the supreme value which must be maintained at all cost. That is to say, Literature as a reality of greater magnitude than the individual writer must be aspired to as a consummation. This interpretation is also applied to the individual writer's work. The novel, play, poem, etc., is viewed as the final or most complete statement of the artist. The end product or work of art is seen as the significant factor in the entire artistic enterprise. The individual artist has served his muse well and produced the absolute, immutable artifact. In other words, the artist's own work is not really considered his own, but rather a brilliant elucidation of that which always was but needed a literary vehicle for display.

Miller, in Stirnerian fashion, makes *himself* the inexorable reality to be displayed and, as such, places himself in the role of the prime mover with freedom to alter the literary vehicle as he chooses. Miller indulges in blasphemy in the eyes of literary critics who would impute to him a high seriousness of pre-meditation. Miller goes on to reveal the casual manipulation with which he created his literature and transformed the act of writing from a process of vertical elucidation of static Ideas into a horizontal dynamic of coordinated, subjective meanderings. He writes:

The conclusion of a book was never anything more than a shift of bodily position. It might have ended in a thousand different ways. No single part of it is finished off: I could resume the narrative at any point, carry on, lay canals,

tunnels, bridges, houses, factories, stud it with other inhabitants, other fauna or flora, all equally true to fact. I have no beginning and no ending, actually. Just as life begins at any moment, through an act of realization, so the work . . . that I plunge in anew each time. Every line and word is vitally connected with my life, my life only . . . Like the spider, I return again and again to the task, conscious that the web I am spinning is made of my own substance, that it will never fail me, never run dry.

Miller makes the point of stating that the “web” he is spinning is made of his “own substance.” This is a significant statement and one which must be examined carefully.

If that which Miller is creating is “made of” his “own substance,” then Miller is re-creating himself with each new literary endeavor. All the “webs” that Miller “spins” are for the purpose of securing and expanding his region in the world. In no way is Miller attempting to discover substances that are alien to him; to do so would place him in the position of bridge or reporter between his readers, who are not, as separate individuals, of his “substance,” i.e., the not-him. Miller’s whole literary dynamic is founded upon the process of creating that which is within him and ingesting that which is without him, i.e., making that which is external and alien to him internal and familiar. Anything which could not be incorporated into Miller’s dynamic was dismissed or relegated to a status inferior enough to warrant being discarded:

I began assiduously examining the style and technique of those whom I once admired and worshipped: Nietzsche, Dostoevski, Hamsun, even Thomas Mann, whom today I discard as being a skillful fabricator, a brick-maker, an inspired jackass or draught-horse. I imitated every style in the hope of finding the clue to the gnawing secret of how to write. Finally I came to a dead end . . . I began from scratch, throwing everything overboard, even those whom I most loved. Immediately I heard my own voice I was enchanted: the fact that it was a separate, distinct, unique

voice sustained me. It didn't matter to me if what I wrote should be considered bad. Good and bad dropped out of my vocabulary. I jumped with two feet into the realm of aesthetics, the nonmoral, nonethical, nonutilitarian realm of art. My life itself became a work of art. I had found a voice, I was whole again.

In Stirnerian terms, Miller was faced with the prospect of remaining subordinate in his reverence for literary ancestry, or being bold and audacious enough to finally discard that literature which was the others' *own* and struggling to achieve Miller's *own*. As Stirner maintains, true ownness only occurs when the individual ego has obliterated all reverence for the past by transforming alien substances into a familiarity which is used as sustenance for the individual ego.

The "not-me" which Stirner refers to is simply, in Miller's writings, those whom he "admired and worshipped." Those great names that Miller finally discarded were representatives of Stirner's "hard diamond of the not-me," that is to say, Literature, or ultimately Culture. Miller achieves ownness by creating a literary style based upon his own immediate subjectivity. All the people and incidents of his daily life are declared more real than traditional, literary constructions:

I am a patriot—of the Fourteenth Ward, Brooklyn, where I was raised. The rest of the United States doesn't exist for me, except as idea, or history, or literature . . .

To be born in the street means to wander all your life, to be free. It means accident and incident, drama, movement. It means above all dream. A harmony of irrelevant facts which gives to your wandering a metaphysical certitude. In the street you learn what human beings really are; otherwise, or afterwards, you invent them. What is not in the open streets is false, derived, that is to say, literature . . .

The boys you worshipped when you first came down into the street remain with you all your life. They are the only real heroes. Napoleon, Lenin, Capone—all fiction. Napoleon is nothing to me in comparison with Eddie Carney, who gave me my first black eye. No man I have ever met seems as princely, as regal, as noble, as Lester Reardon who, by the mere act of walking down the street, inspired fear and admiration . . . Johnny Paul was the living Odyssey of the Fourteenth Ward; that he later became a truck driver is an irrelevant fact.

Here Miller bases his literary aesthetic upon sheer emotive response. Logical and analytical constructions, which are manifestations of traditional Culture, are discarded. The very subject matter itself of Miller's writings defies the well-bred and sophisticated. Their tastes would be for the very things which Miller claims are fictitious.

A final consideration to pursue, after having observed Miller's views on Culture, is his interpretation of Knowledge. If Miller, like Stirner, ascribes reality only to the individual ego, what is the status of epistemology in Miller's outlook? Here is the way Miller states his case in *The Cosmological Eye*:

Just as literature swings at times from the poetic to the prosodic, so nowadays we have the swing from the physical disorders to the mental, with the inevitable emergence of new types of genius cropping out among the mental healers. All that the creative personality demands is a new field for the exercise of its powers; out of the dark, inchoate forces, these personalities will, by the exercise of their creative faculties, impose upon the world a new ideology, a new and vital set of symbols. What the collective mass desires is the concrete, visible, tangible substance . . . which

the theories of Freud, Jung, Rank, Stekel, et alii, provide. This they can pore over, chew, masticate, tear to pieces, or prostrate themselves before. Tyranny always works best under the guise of liberating ideas. The tyranny of ideas is merely another way of saying the tyranny of a few great personalities.

This is Miller's ultimate epistemological statement. Usually, knowledge is construed as a massive collective enterprise which possesses coherence and is added to by the learned individuals who become *members* of this enterprise which is greater than themselves. Miller, in Stirnerian fashion, interprets knowledge as the imposition of one individual personality upon one or more others. There is the storm and stress of inevitable clash and the dominant personality, having succeeded in imposing his set of symbols upon the others, is now free to proclaim his own set of symbols. Revolt and holocaust are the cornerstones of Miller's technique as a literary figure.

Just as Max Stirner exhibited that a "drab and inconsequential reality was compensated for by an assertive philosophy concerned with limitless human possibility," so Miller transformed what he interpreted as the inertia of all traditional culture into the fuel and energy for his own vehicle, his own realm of the possible. Albert Maillet appreciated Miller's life stance, which became a literary stance, when Maillet wrote that he felt he was "in the presence of another intellectual giant, dominating our world from an inconceivable height, far ahead of our times, solitary, in the virgin spaces of the future."

—Robert Paglia

A major symposium on the topic of Women in Our Time will be conducted on the University of New Haven campus in the late spring of 1976. In conjunction with this event the Spring 1976 issue of the **NOISELESS SPIDER**, Vol. V No. 2, will be devoted entirely to writing by and about women. See following page for contest instructions.

SPECIAL WOMEN'S ISSUE!

The Spring 1976 issue of *The Noiseless Spider* will be devoted entirely to writings *by or about women*. We invite everyone to submit entries for publication to Mrs. Louise Allen, Room 214-A, Main Building. A cash prize of one hundred dollars (\$100) will be awarded to the best piece of writing, *prose or poetry*, submitted by a currently enrolled UNH student.

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A noiseless patient spider
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood
isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast
surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding
them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans
of space,
Carelessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking
the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch
somewhete, O my soul.

Walt Whitman